[NEW SERIES.]
Vol. 4. *Price, 10 Cents. Per Annum, $3.* No. 16.

[Whole No. 355.]

SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1875.

Subject: The Communion of Saints.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

NEW YORK:
J. B. FORD & COMPANY,
(27 PARK PLACE, AND 24 & 26 MURRAY STREET,)
1875.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.
European Agents: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Crown Buildings.
188 Fleet Street, London. Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

AUTHORIZATION.

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."—HEB. xii. 1.

The strictly historical form of this passage is derived from the preceding enumeration by the writer of this book of Hebrews, whoever he was, of the most eminent Jewish worthies, who, from time to time, achieved memorable deeds by the belief of the unseen, which is defined to be *faith*.

Now, whether or not in the apostle's mind this was designed to be purely a poetic picture, historically illustrated, does not appear; but we can very well, without the slightest straining, suppose that the apostle did intend here to teach the intimate relation between those worthies that had gone before, and all who were striving and struggling on earth to reach the eternal life.

Undoubtedly, by the presentation of these examples to the understanding, and by the quickening of man's aspiration, courage and hope, and by the perception of victory wrought under circumstances of great difficulty, the apostle may have held forth these examples simply as one way in which to act on the human mind according to its law, presenting this cloud of witnesses that had triumphed as an incitement to us to triumph; but to my thinking there is much more in the passage. They are witnesses not in that kind of low and historical form. There is a vitality in this. We are not looking back period by period to those names of honor and

SUNDAY MORNING, June 27, 1875. LESSON: HEB. xii. 18-24; REV. v. 1-14. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 837, 912, 1251.

victory: we are surrounded by them *now*. They are described as hovering in the heavens above us, and as being a great crowd of spectators—witnesses; and in view of their down-looking and in-looking we are exhorted to take heart, and press forward on our life-work.

So then, this is, or may at any rate, without violence to the spirit of the sacred text, be accepted as a teaching of the communion of the saints—at least of the fellowship and sympathy, and so of the communion, of the spirits of just men made perfect, who, out of their realm of glory, look down upon the toiling masses of mankind in this mortal sphere, think of them, watch them, wish them well, succor them, and give us reason and permission to lift up our minds toward them, to rejoice with them, and to help ourselves by their examples.

It is a thought which no man will reject lightly, that while the lower forms of human life are not in intimate connection, the higher forms of human life are. Commerce by the body is limited. We know those who are next to us, who are near to us, or who come within the reach of our eyesight: but we are conscious that we live a great deal more of our life with men whom we never saw, whose figure we cannot even imagine; but whose poetry, whose essays, whose historical works, and whose religious meditations we read; and they are more companionable, more personal to us than those whom we behold with the outward vision. They take hold of more points in us, and higher ones, than do those who dwell under the same roof, or who are in our immediate neighborhood. We are more intimately acquainted with men who dwell in Germany, or in France, or in England, whom we never saw and whom we never shall see in the flesh, than we are with those who dwell by our side. The weakness of man lies in the rude beginning of life; but as you go up along the scale of thought and imagination and feeling, man widens, and is no longer bound by latitudes and longitudes. And yet, all things change; and we are conscious that men belong to us who, by ordinary measurements are far from us; and that our communion is not lip nor eye nor ear service; that our most profound communion in this world is that

unconscious, invisible, unreported communion, by which the higher elements of our nature hold commerce through grand thoughts; profound meditations, noble impulses; so that the men whom you know best, if you have been accustomed to water the garden of the Lord in you by showers descending from benign clouds, are the men who are represented between the covers of a book, and not the men whom the eye has seen, and the hand has handled.

We have in this a kind of fore-disclosure, a sort of intimation, of the larger relationship which the mind is to have to the universe, when that which helps it, though imprisoning it in the beginning, hinders it all the rest of the way. When the body gives place, there is a reality of this higher power disclosed which we have here in spots and imperfect glances.

So then, when I think of those that have gone before, and have ascended into the heavenly city, it does not seem to me that they are separated from me, and I from them, simply because the bodies are no longer in communion. The mind-communion is of a different kind, with different rules, and with a majesty of power which is unknown to muscle or nerve.

Now, the communion of the saints, the fellowship of the heavenly host with us here upon earth, is a truth that ought to be very dear to us, as it is full of inspiration and full of consolation.

You will observe that the superior always includes the inferior. The lower animals cannot look up to those that are above them except in very limited degrees. They do it increasingly as the brain increases in the animal kingdom—as the mind system is more and more developed in them; but, after all, the range in which what is below can take hold of that which is above is very small, very narrow. On the other hand, the superior always includes in itself whatever is inferior; because we have in ourselves the germs of all that is below, only that it is developed into a larger form of activity and power.

So then, while the lower forms of animal life and the lower forms of human life with very great difficulty can lift

themselves up to any conception of the higher disclosures of the development of this mortal life, those that are above can with great facility understand downwards.

It is true that we find it very difficult to go up the scale of disembodied being, and to take into our thought, with any precision or definiteness, the reality of any existence but our own; and we help ourselves by analogies and by pictorial imaginative efforts; but they who have gone into the higher life, they who are disabused of bodily limitations, and have the liberty of the higher manhood, have not the same obscurity which we have. They look down and understand us perfectly, though we but very imperfectly understand them. And here is over again that which you see in every household—the little child looking up wistfully to the father and mother, and wondering what their words mean and what their thoughts are; while the father and mother look down on the little child, and take it in, and understand it perfectly, and a great deal more. The race of God's people on earth, aspiring to spirit life, look up like little children, and wonder what it can mean that all who have gone before are in sympathy and communion; but the great host above our heads, more numerous than the drops of dew at night—that great saintly redeemed host of the upper life—look down upon our childhood with a more perfect understanding of us than we have of the children that we are rearing in our families; and the question, methinks, must come to men, "What do they think? What is their spirit?" Too often they are cold, and mere phosphorescent drawings on the background of imagination; too often we think that these things are scarcely worth our time; we think that business should occupy man while he is in this life, as it should; but in order to be perfectly accomplished in physical things you need the refreshment and the inspiration which come from the invisible.

It may be worth our while to spend a little time, this morning, in the contemplation, though it may be largely imaginative, of the way in which they who have gone before, and who are exalted above all imperfection, look down upon mortal life, how they think of it, and how they sympathize

with it. We are to remember, it is to be borne in mind, that those who have been perfected are perfect in the same direction in which God himself is perfect.

Here upon earth we are very largely fighting for the maintenance of our own castle, and we are obliged to treat everybody suspiciously, and to repel everybody. The unfortunate necessity which we have inherited from the ages that are gone by, is, that a man is so obliged to defend himself against social bias, pride, avarice, the various inclinations of the flesh; that he fortifies himself in a kind of hard way by looking at all things around about him and resisting them. This, however, is not a virtue. It is a part of the misfortune of our lower condition. However necessary it may be, it is a necessity which marks the imperfect, lower condition of organization. But as men go up, that which is narrow, intense, selfish, and even bigoted in earthly life, tends to dissolve; and in the other life they who look down upon us look not out of the narrowness, and exclusiveness, and bigotry, and intensity of self-conscious rectitude. They repel from their minds uncharitable suspicion or condemnation. All those things belong to the lower stages of existence.

When the saints, the spirits of just men, who, being just, abhorred iniquity, did not know how to stop short, and abhorred the iniquitous man; when men that hated evil, and knew not how to stop with that, but hated evil men also—when they are made perfect, they will have the same repugnance against evil, but it will be joined with infinite compassion and infinite sympathy toward those who are under the dominion and power of evil; for, as God is Father and Saviour universal, so those who are drawn up toward him become perfect in the ratio of their likeness to him, and of the strength in them of the same attributes that make him Father over all.

The great assembly above us, therefore, look down upon earth, seeing things, not as when they dwelt among men, but as souls must see them, when ripened into goodness. Hence they are never thinking of themselves. They are enlarged. They are drawn away from selfishness. It is spontaneous for them to be in sympathy with others, and with contin-

uous compassion and sorrow they flash their thoughts down upon the great dark orb that rolls around us.

Some men think that evil spirits, in banded multitudes, flit in the twilight round and round the globe, and that the kingdom of darkness has supremacy over the world. To a certain extent this is probably true; but to my thought the kingdom of light is transcendently more glorious than the kingdom of darkness, and more powerful; and saintly thoughts, and celestial messengers, and all the divine influences that set in from the other sphere upon the world, are ten thousand times more than the evil influences.

What, then, are some of the influences which we may suppose, rationally and without extravagance, pass through the minds and hearts of those that are in glory?

In the first place, their own previous earthly experience will give them sympathy for those that are below. They will, in looking back upon the sphere where their lives were passed, see human life in a different color; and the fact that they had the struggles, and the trials, and the doubts, and the overthrow, and the refreshing and remedial influences which are so needful to us—all that experience of their own —will enrich and vivify their thought toward us.

After the great and cruel war was over, recently, there drew together on the banks of the Hudson the generals that had originally been educated at West Point, and had been divided, and had gone through divers campaigns. They were brought together again in communion and common fellowship; and they sat down, doubtless many and many an hour, to interchange their history one with another, and felt the most profound sympathy with each other—a sympathy which overmastered difference of disposition and difference of judgment. On the one side and on the other they had been campaigners; they had been with each other or against each other; but nevertheless, the camp, the bivouac, the battle, the march, the overthrow, the victory, the ten thousand things that surge through war, had been common to them; and the mere fact that they had gone through like experiences brought them together with a kind of brotherhood.

Now, this is so even in the lower forms of human life; but if you conceive a state in which men are enfranchised, and take things, not in the narrow limitations that belong to bodily life, but with that large vision which belongs to spiritual life in the other world, when they look back and see us moving through the scenes that they themselves have threaded, weeping the old tears over again, sighing the old groans over again, desponding the old despair over again, and rejoicing with the old joys over again, they are looking back, as it were, upon themselves. Yea, more, is it not possible that they shall interpret something of their own estate as redeemed and perfected, from the suggestions and from the souvenirs of the old estate in which we are; and that we are interesting to them, not merely because we are the children of God, but because we are the patterns of themselves?

I have seen some of these souvenirs of my own childhood; I have seen some portraitures of my mere boyhood; and I look upon them with an intense compassion and interest; and I am conscious of an undistinguishable throng of fancies and feelings. I cannot explain them nor solve them all by analysis, when I look upon them and think that that is what I was, and also think what life has been doing since; but nevertheless, there is a personal identity. I am coupled with it. I go back on my own self in that way to a limited degree. It is a part of that charm with which we return to childhood's experience. It is a part of the charm with which you revisit the old farm-house where you were born, and walk the lane where you a thousand times drove the cows to pasture or brought them thence; it is a part of the charm with which you remember the old well, whose creaking was so pleasant to you. You are glad to find that the old sweep is still there. It is a part of the charm with which you see the old school-house where you went to school; the old stones that were your base; the old brook where you first caught your tiny fish; the old trees that still sing in summer and wave in winter. These things are not interesting by anything that you can analyze, but there is a mystery about them; and you are conscious that you take hold of

them because there is something of yourself in them. Some strange and witching influence goes back along the thread of your life to those early beginnings; and they who are in that upper life looking out from the heavenly spheres, and seeing their counterpart in us—seeing in us the same experiences, the same lessons, the same mistakes, the same vanquishment, the same victories, the same everything that belonged to them—how they are stirred up in themselves! We can well conceive, in small degrees, of the interest which they have in us because we are doing what they have done.

The same mysteries, the same problems of human life, then, under such circumstances, will add the element of sympathy and of interest to those who are down-lookers from the heavenly spheres upon us.

Sometimes, from the upper windows of my house, I have looked out across the river, and seen the fog that hugged low down and set all the steamboats to whistling and moaning, and all the bells to ringing. I could see the boats groping their way up and down, and getting across as best they might, running hither and thither at all hazards. It was a low lying fog, and I could see over the whole of it. If it was evening, the stars were all bright above me; but they who were in the boats down there were in twilight darkness. There was a life going on there; but I sat and saw over it. There was a great deal of anxiety in steering; but I could put my finger right where the slip was, and say, "There! there! there!" every minute, when they could not.

There are thousands of things that we call mysteries in human life which are no mysteries—which are simply want of experience. With experience they cease to be mysterious. We are ourselves perpetually destroying mystery by gathering knowledge. Knowledge and mystery are incompatible. But there are higher sources of mystery. The way toward time and the world; the way of God's providence toward the human soul; the administration of pleasure and pain; the way in which we are lifted up and cast down; the thousand peculiarities which belong to every separate saint, and which cause him so often to examine his heart, and cry out in prayer, "How long, O Lord, how long? Why, O Lord,

why is this?" All these things which perplex us in our mortal life, they who are redeemed look down upon and smile at.

If my child, having once been stung by a hornet in summer, screams and runs to me when a blue-bottle fly is after him, and throws himself into my arms, I cannot help laughing, though he is greatly distressed and thinks that a hornet is behind him and is going to sting him; I know that it is nothing but a fly which has no sting.

We are worse children to the saints in glory than our children are to us here; and the million troubles and annoyances from which we suffer, are nothing but harmless flies that are after us. They are gnats; but men think they are giants. All the petty, false fantasies of human life men look upon as serious obstacles in their way; and they wonder at such campaigning as theirs; but the angels, looking upon them, laugh and say, "How strange that they do not see!" Yes, and how strange it is to us that *they* did not see when they were in our place; but now they do see; and seeing—well, I hope they enjoy themselves; for, if they do not laugh in heaven we are deceived by the constitution which is given to us on earth. If they smile (and I hope they do), it is because they see through that which we do not see through. Nevertheless, they have compassion on us because we do not see through these things; and the solemn meanings that are in lights and shadows, the consolations of the innumerable providences under which we are drilling here, all those things they understand, though we do not; and on that very account they are profoundly interested in our history.

It is as if a strange bark were striving to come into the harbor of New York, and an old pilot, lifted up on some tower or some high hill, and knowing where the channel ran, sat waving his hand, and saying, "Bear, bear away to the right;" and then, "Swerve, swerve to the left;" and then, "Go straight forward—straight forward;" and so enabled the captain to keep the vessel off from this sand-bar, or that hidden rock, thus, afar off, in various ways guiding through a tortuous channel one who knew it not, while he knew it perfectly well, having been a navigator there. You

can imagine with what intense interest he would watch and see how the captain got along—especially if it were some relative, and more especially if it were his son, that he saw making for the harbor.

Now, we are not to believe that in the heavenly estate all natural affection is gone. We are not to believe that in the world beyond men lose that for which life is a training-ground, and for which they have been brought up by all manner of institutions and instrumentalities. The natural outcome of the family institution serves to increase the tendency of our consideration for each other, and the fineness of our feeling one for another. Do you suppose that the affections which it takes fourscore years to educate here do not grow in the heavenly life? I believe no mother ever thinks so much of her children outside of heaven as she does of her children inside of heaven. No companion was ever so deep in friendship on earth as in the heavenly land.

I see people on this side go mourning without the consolation of these truths; but the truths themselves are the same. There are men like some that we read of on whose farms gold mines exist, and they are planting potatoes, and pumpkins, and corn, and are raising pigs. They are poor; they live the meagrest of lives; and yet, right under their pigs, right under their corn, are gold sands, if they only knew it; but they do not know it, and they are impoverished and miserable.

Now, gold sands, gold mountains, treasures better than gold, treasures of the soul—these are ours; and our poverty is that we do not apprehend, that we do not know, that we do not "take;" and so men go alone that are not alone—that never were so united. It takes death to make unity. The body that seems to unite us here by juxtaposition and propinquity is in the way of unity; it begins the work; but the work is only begun by it. The real union in this life is that of imagination with imagination, reason with reason, hope with hope, faith with faith, and love with love. The higher manhood is that which twines souls together. And who does not know that bodily life and soul-life are different? Who does not know that the strength or worth of affection

lies in that which is invisible and inward? And yet, those very persons, living in the power of the invisible communion between souls, really live soul-lives, their soul being the candle, and their body but the candlestick. And when death separates the soul from the body, men say, "Gone! gone! gone!"

No, not gone—not gone. Within the reach of your voice, within the reach of your thought, within the reach of your memory, within the reach of your love, are those that have left you. There is not one single thing that my children have taken away from me. Does not my heart enshrine them yet? There is not one single thing that has made a co-worker or friend dear to me which I have lost by the bodily dying of that friend or co-worker. I take hold of them, and they are nearer to me, and they are a thousand times more worthy of my soul's twining, than they were when they were in the flesh. Those who look out on the mottled scene of human life from above—your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your child, your companions, your Christian fellow-laborers—are a thousand times nearer to you than when they sat beside you on the same seat, and sung out of the same book with you; for soul-nearness is what brings men together.

To me the heavens are not obliterated. To me the dead are not dead. They never were so quick as they are to-day. The great multitude who have gone up still exist. Thanks be to God that there is something else in heaven besides angels that never knew how to weep, having known only everlasting purity and perfection. Heaven is thick-set and studded all over with souls that have known just my trouble, and have wept in my place, and have fought where I fight, and have been overthrown where I have been overthrown, and have triumphed where I am to triumph, and who look down with perpetual comprehension and compassion upon the scenes in which we are actors now. Yea, theirs is the very voice that says, from the heavenly gates, "Come, and let him that heareth say come, and whosoever will let him come." They cry to us from their heavenly sphere.

Now, is it nothing that there is the communion of

saints? Is it nothing that the accumulated treasures of ages and nations, and every form of culture are gathered together, and are so many attractive forces, so many spiritual elements, tending to draw us up thither; so many objects on which our minds can rest; so many materials by which we can draw fancy-pictures—for the pictures of the fancy are the best pictures that men do draw?

Then there must be a great joy, to a benevolent soul, in the consciousness of the coming glory. I do not know what it is that makes persons enjoy the pain of other people, but they do. If, for instance, parents want to give a child something, they somehow like to make the child think they are going to take something away from him, so that the surprise shall make a rebound of joy which is greater. We bring in a letter, with a sad face, and throw it into the wife's lap, and say, "Oh! read that;" and she begins to read it with arched brow and open mouth; and then looks up with surprise, instantly, on finding that it is full of mirth and gladness. That is an element which runs through human life.

Now, there is nothing that is worth anything in this life that you do not get in a larger form in the life which is to come; and so I think, without a doubt, the angelic host are mirthful. I know they are. If they are not they cannot sympathize with me. The angelic host are full of divine humor; and God smiled when he put humor into the human composition, and said, "That is good," specially, as of the whole world he said, "It is good," generally. I think that the angelic host sit and look on the warfare of life not seeing everything earnestly that we see earnestly; not seeing things with our limitations; but seeing them with their experience and their certainty. Therefore, when men are going into a valley of rare and exquisite delight, through a narrow gorge which is dark and chill, and where it looks as though they were going into a cave's mouth at midnight, and they shudder, I do not wonder that they laugh when in a minute they come out where it is all sunlight and beauty. And when the angels hear mothers weeping over things concerning their children which are for their children's good; when

they see men push away God with all their might, not knowing that it is God; when they hear men say, "Oh, what sorrows!" in regard to things that are bringing golden censers in their hands; when they see men rejecting heavenly messengers that bring down the bread of life to hunger and the water of life to thirst—when they see these things there must be some veins of humor, I think, in their minds. There must be some veins of humor in the minds of those angels who see us fighting shadows, resisting realities, crying over things that should give us joy, rejoicing over things that should bring tears, triumphing when we are defeated and do not know it, mourning when we are victorious and do not know that, and making mistakes incessantly. To those who have been through life; to those who know what the better land is, what the great processes of God are, and what are the glorious revelations of the future, it must be amusing to see us go through life. Do you not suppose that it gives occupation and amusement to those who understand this, that, and the other mystery and problem of providence when they behold us? If an angel had nothing better to do, I think he could spend much of his time in watching and seeing what fools good folks are in this world, and what strange developments come through our ignorance, and from the conflicts between the spirit and the flesh in this mortal sphere.

Then, not only do they see the full relation between pain and joy, not only do they behold the full scheme of God in soul-building, and the relations of men to natural law and society, and the relations of revealed truth to the divine Spirit, but they have a wonderful sense of what that manhood is, and is worth, which time is working out in us.

It is very natural that we should think of the thing that is next to us. I can imagine that one of those little polyps of the coral reef species should think that the cell which he has built around him is the final end of creation in this world. He has built up by accretion around him a little tube; he is in it; he calls it his universe; as far as he can, he would defend it; and dying, he feels as though the world would miss him. Through a hundred thousand years five times repeated little fools like this have been building their

tubes, until at last the foundation of an island has been reared. Half a million years have been brooding, and a soil has been created; and now it swarms with vegetation; and all manner of lush prodigal fruit is produced; and a population is there; and the final end of these little polyps and their little tubes is this wondrous island, of which they have been architects.

Now, we are in time workers with God; and each of us is a pin-point in the great host of workers, all of whom are contributing a little; and the outcome and result of human life in the case of each is that he is to be the heritor of the whole combined product. We are to inherit all these things in our final manhood; but we do not realize it; men do not know what manhood is. But I say that truth is a plank on which a man can trust himself. No matter what the appearance may be, it is safe to be true. I declare that honor is an immutable safety. I affirm that the higher nature of man is wiser in its machinery and operations, though it take longer for it to turn around, than his lower nature.

Men say, "That is the right thing to preach; because you must carry your anchor out a great way if you want to warp your ship towards it; but you must not expect your congregation to come up to these magnanimities. All ideas of heroic manhood are good; but, of course, they are to be taken with immense dilution. Speaking the truth is good, because if we do not speak the truth, we cannot get along in business. Magnanimity, in the long run, is proper." So they take these higher qualities in the soul and measure them by what they are worth in the market,—by how much they would be of service in business; by how much secular pleasure there is in them; whereas the manhood which is developed in man is an eternal quality. It is something which belongs to the infinities and the ages; and we are not apt to see it. We do not look at the grand manhood elements in their coming ripeness. We see these qualities as they are undergoing education here, and while they are to us matters of experience, matters of regret, or matters of the most purblind understanding. These things, which are so dim to us, are to the perfected saints as clear as crystal, and they have pro-

found sympathy for us, because they see that we are striving upward; and they say to us, "You are building better than you have any idea of. You have no conception of what you are doing."

I can understand very well how it is with the makers of fine pottery. Many artists are employed. There are workers in figures, and there are workers in flowers, and they are not the same. There are workers in metallic substances, and there are embellishers, and they are not the same. There are many of them; and as they work each one naturally works on his own part; and it takes the sum of all their work to bring that on which they are working to its final estate, and show what it is to create such articles of beauty.

Now, men are being wrought upon by one influence and another; and as yet they are scattered; they are not coherent in their consciousness; but they who look down upon human life from above see how all things work together for good to him that loves God. There is a bomb-proof for you.

It does not take a great deal to make a man happy in this world. I can give you two or three texts which, if you were to digest them in the substance of your being, would make you a very happy man; and that is one of them—"All things work together for good to them that love God." If with that a man cannot get redemption from the annoyances of time, he is past all help. It is one of those things which, if a man realizes it, believes it, covers him with a triple armor that no barb can pierce. It destroys discontent and fear and doubt. Let a man say, if he would be happy, "I love God, and God knows it; and if all the world is under his control, and everything is working for good, I am content; whatever comes, whether it seems good or bad, is the father of good: it is the seed, or it is the fruit, or it is both."

The saints rejoice, therefore, in that glory which shall be revealed in us. They rejoice in that which is reserved for Christ's people; that which is laid up for them; that of which we never have a conception, but of which they have experience.

Oh! if those who are gone out from us could only come back again to speak with us; if those who sorrowed unto

death bitterly, could only come back to those who are sorrowing bitterly unto death, to speak to them, now enlightened as they are, having seen the heavenly vision, having beheld the august throne of love, having heard the new song which no man can learn unless he has been redeemed, having tasted the power of the world to come, and been clothed in it, having touched the experience of royalty, and felt the power of it — if when they look out upon us toiling here below, they could with infinite tenderness and compassion speak to us, how would they lead us through the rough places, and over the steep roads, and through the bitter vales of tears! And how would they cheer and chide us at the same time for want of faith, for want of hope, saying, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." Reading the immortal verse of Watts, reading the seraph flights of Wesley, reading the master conceptions of Milton, reading the noblest imaginings of Dante, reading whatever the highest thoughts of the noblest men in time have fashioned of the coming glory, they would say, "This is but the dust. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath reserved for those that love him."

To-day, Christian brethren, this is your company. High overhead are all those rejoicing multitudes. They have not passed beyond labor, nor growth, nor development, but they have passed beyond the vile, ignoble temptations which belong to this sphere. They have cast off the body with all its mischiefs and liabilities. They have triumphed; and theirs is a triumph which insures perpetuity. They have already been crowned; their hand is familiar with every string; they are chorded with every chorus or melody of the heavenly throng; their face is brighter than the sun; the glory of the Lord rests upon them; and yet, in this altitude, in this magnitude, in the multitude of their experiences, in their transcendent joys, they are nearer to you than they ever were before, and they are more utterly mingled with your life than they ever were before.

I do not undertake to say that the inspirations which come to me come from my mother; and yet I think it is very likely that they do; and there is no harm in my thinking so.

I do not say that my little children come whispering to me tender thoughts which ally me to youth and infancy; and yet I think it is very likely that they do; and there is no harm in my thinking so. I do not say that those great reformers and martyrs and heroic men who have not counted their life dear to them, are my armor bearers, and touch my soul with courage, and fire my heart with an unconquerable zeal to make known to men the riches of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ toward them; and yet I think it not unlikely that such is the case; and there is no harm in my thinking so. I do not yet know the alphabet of the lore of the spirit world; but this I know: a cloud of witnesses, made up of the noblest men that ever lived, hold me in full survey; and I am wilting or blossoming under their sight, not only, but they are not cold spectators. They cry out to me. They are, as it were, sending heavenly greeting down to me. In their place, with urgency and zeal, and divine longings and inspirations, they move on me, soul to soul, and press me onward and upward.

Call it by what name you will, the air is full of God, and the spirits of men made perfect; and may not these spirits be divinely sent as messengers to those who are called of God?

In this thought how populous life is! How it transforms the world with its teeming populations! How the silence of the universe begins to speak, and how the darkness of the unsearched realm begins to show twilight, and daylight, and the glorious noonday! How this life begins to seem small as it is; and how the other life begins to show the extent of its horizon!

There is great comfort in these thoughts of the other life, of those that inherit it, and of ourselves that are pressing into it. The things of the world to come exert a mighty influence on us here. It is in the power of things that are not to our senses to bring to nought things that are. Riches cease to be our masters. Bodily pleasures cease to be our tempters. Earthly life ceases to have dominion over us. Things above us and beyond us, for the description of which adequate words were never formed, rain down sweet in-

fluences upon us. They help us in our thought and prayer. Living or dying they will help us. When this life flows out that life will flow in. And when we rise, leaving behind bowed heads, moistened eyes, souls burdened with grief, and the unseemly lamentations of men, and have ascended but a little way, then, caught in the reflux of the divine light, and rushing straight toward the crowned Love, the first glance shall tell us that all that we have gathered up of life here is worthless as a conception of the life that is to come; is so much more, so much finer, so much richer, so much more joyful.

Then, be patient. Endure to the end. And when you and I meet in heaven—and we *shall* meet there—we will take hold of hands inseparable in love, and will together bow down, and say to him that brought us there, amidst acclaiming witnesses, in number overpowering computation, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Love, be all the praise. *Amen.*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our Heavenly Father, that though no footstep lies between us and thee, and no thought-print ever lasts, yet the way is familiar—the way of the soul; the way of sorrow; the way of repentance and heartfelt grief; the way of admiration, of yearning, of love, of faith, of trust, of settled peace undisturbed. We are drawn near to thee, always new, always old in experience, still weak and sinning, still springing away from transgression and towards purity, evermore children of the dust, evermore sons of God, feeling our mortal origin, yearning to break through and take full possession of our immortality, stricken with weakness, redeemed with power, groveling, sorrowing, subject to time and distress, in perfect peace. So our life is full of strange crossings and enigmas before thee; and if we look up and down and around, measuring by time thoughts, how strange are the mysteries, the unanswered and unanswerable questions! and yet to thee and to thy redeemed ones there are no mysteries, and the lore of wonder is all swept away by the early experience of the heavenly estate; and the obscure is plain, the hidden is revealed, and all things blossom with joy where thou art.

To that blessed land and experience we aspire. Through clouds, through storms, through calms, through light and through darkness, by day and by night, by joy and by sorrow, we reach toward the promised rest, asking only convoy and guidance and perfect assurance. We are willing to linger; we are willing to bear up in the midst of storms; we are willing to take the yoke and the burden. All that we ask is the sense of thy presence, and the joy of thy salvation; that fruit by the way which thou has sent unto us; those flowers that blossom even along the desert edge; that manna which came down from heaven. And we rejoice that thy people have never had reason to complain. For thou art the Faithful One. Thy fidelity has been beyond all expression, not by outward gifts alone, not in the showing of the wonders of time; but thou art dealing more munificently in the spirit realm, and we are too blind there to see. Thy mercies are passing and settling upon us, and distilling upon us their balm and freshness, but we know it not. We are as children that sleep, and do not know what the mother thinks who bends above them with infinite love and fidelity. So life passes, laden from above with the ineffable; but we dwell so far from the ineffable that it is untranslated to us. We think at times that the heavens are opening; that they are less opaque to us than at other times; and that things which seem to descend as thunder in summer are purifying, and leave the horizon clear so that vision is restored with greater power.

We rejoice that all things are for our sakes who are in Christ Jesus; and that all things—things the most dissevered, things the most widely scattered, things the most apparently unconnected—work together in the great scheme of redemption which thou dost administer, and of which we are the subjects. We come pitiful and crying, as if there never had been souls distressed before. When

thou hast been conducting infinite numbers through the same experiences, light and dark, we come moaning as if they did not moan who now shake the heaven with their triumphant songs. We come bent and prone to the earth, as if strength was there, not remembering the stature and the glory and the power of those that once also went prone, and have been redeemed from weakness, and have by death been brought to life and power and victory eternal. For thou art the God of eternity, and since being was, thou hast been conducting it with infinite compassion and love, augmenting; and by ways mysterious thou hast caused all creation to know thy power, and to be drawn onward and outward and upward, making little much, and more of much, and still augmenting the treasure and the riches of thy grace till they are past the comprehension of souls glorified.

We rejoice that when we shall see thee as thou art, and know something of the revelation of the invisible, the world that seems so barren at times will seem then stored full of all the signs and indications of thy wondrous power. For here we are living by the senses; and how poor is the realm of the sense compared with that of faith, toward which we but feebly aspire, and in which we dwell only twinklingly and occasionally!

O Lord, grant that at least we may have so much of faith as to discern what is unseen. How full, and strong, and rich, and joyful is the unseen as over against the weakness, and the sin, and the tears, and the pains, and the difficulties, and the ignoble dishonors of the visible life! And may we rise above the storms, finding in faith that certain and abiding rest which we so much need in this life.

We pray that thou wilt grant to all those who cry to thee this morning the intimation of thy presence, and such whispering to the soul of each one that he shall find himself beloved of God. May we know that thy thoughts are toward us; that thou art not a merchant conditioning thy goodness; that thou art shining bright as the sun shines with its gifts of love and mercy.

Blessed are they that take it, and poor are they that reject it; but it fills the universe, as the sun fills the world with light.

Grant that each one may so rise up from the dullness of this mortal sense as to discern the thought of the beneficent God toward him; the stature of thy thought of mercy; the reach and power of thy decreeing thought of love. Oh, that the fullness of the thought of thy mercy toward us might fill us with hope and restfulness. Not that we shall be content with imperfection, and less that we shall be content with sin; but in the midst of sighing, imperfection and sin we wrestle by day and by night, that we may have thought of the coming summer; that we may have serenity in the thought that that which is planted shall have blossom, and that the blossom shall bring forth fruit.

O Lord our God, why hast thou stirred such thoughts in us? Why hast thou set over against our yearnings these promises which are full of mercies more fragrant than the opening leaves in spring, and more full of summer than the summer is full of sweetness, why hast thou so turmoiled our soul with the blessedness of expectation,

if there is nothing beyond this world? Thou art not a deluder. Thou art not sitting through the centuries to deceive. We know that thou art, from the outreaching there is within us. There is no meaning in our better life, and in our higher thoughts, if thou art not glorious beyond all comprehension; if thou art not full of infinite compassion and mercy. We submit ourselves to thy guidance. We rejoice in thee, unknown, unseen, unfelt, unrealized, and unpossessed except in the faintest measure. We rejoice in the hope of the coming glory when thou shalt be revealed; when thou shalt look upon the book written within and without; when thou shalt behold and read to us what is the outer and inner life of the soul; and when all that are reconciled shall cause the heaven and its treasure to break forth into resounding joy and thanksgiving.

And now we commit ourselves to thee. As little children put their hands in their father's hand, so we put our hands in thine. We put weakness into the power of omnipotence, blindness into omniscience, and selfishness into the tropic of love, and ask, as the sum and as the inclusion of all, that thou wilt continue to shine, and to do exceeding abundantly more for us than we can ask or think.

Grant thyself to all in thy presence who come to thy house in peculiar circumstances of need or of trial; and grant thyself to them in such dispensation as thou seest that they need. Succor those who need to be snatched from danger. Lift up those who are borne down. Deliver those who are in any peril which hinders their better life from controling the life of the flesh.

We pray that thou wilt multiply thy mercies consciously to those that lift up thought and yearning and petition to-day, and bring them near to thee. Open the heart that it may flow as the rock with cleansing streams.

And grant thy blessing to rest, not only upon this congregation, but upon all that it represents in the home life. Remember our absent ones—all that are upon the sea, and all that are in foreign lands. Remember every household into which darkness has come, where thou art walking vailed. Reveal thyself to them in their sorrow, and say, "Whom I love I chasten." Grant that thy kingdom may come in all churches of every name. We pray for thy servants who preach the Gospel that they may have a revelation of God in Christ Jesus that shall comfort them, enrich them, and strengthen them to do their work among men. May they sacrifice themselves for others.

Grant, we pray thee, that thy Spirit may prevail among the nations; that laws and institutions and governments may be reformed everywhere; may the whole race rise; and by thy spirit of regeneration which has come forth from thy soul through the ages, may mankind be transformed, leaving behind the power of the flesh. Grant that the race, imbued with the might of the spirit, may speedily come to knowledge, to purity, to truth, to liberty, and to the power of thyself in Christ Jesus.

So may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done upon earth as it in heaven, and to the Father, the Son and the Spirit shall be the praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, grant us in our low and listless state something of that divine vision, and something by faith of that divine love by which we shall eke out the poor measure of our natural life; by which we shall carry in ourselves something of the Spirit from above.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt comfort those who need comforting. Open this great abyss, and fill it full of all influences that shall bless impoverished hearts. Let the streams flow down, without which we are but deserts, that out from the midst of them there may grow those experiences, those joys, those holy fruits of the Spirit which shall make us indeed worthy to be called the sons of God. Bless us in singing again; bless us in all the hours of this day; bless us in every duty yet remaining; bring us grace and help in time of need; and so conduct us through life, and let none of us fail. Bring every one of us, with all whom we love, into the kingdom of thy glory, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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